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SUBJECT: S/WGI PROJECT PROPOSAL - COLOMBIA

REF: 09 STATE 132094

SUMMARY

[¶1.](#) Embassy Bogota nominates the project proposal "Political Training for Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Women" by the Departmental Network of Choco for the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) small grants initiative. The project complements Post's strategy to promote opportunities for Afro-Colombians and the indigenous, and advances USG objectives in Colombia by strengthening civil society and development in two of the country's most vulnerable communities. End Summary.

AFRO-COLOMBIAN AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES:

AN EMBASSY PRIORITY

[¶2.](#) Colombia's populations of Afro-descendants (between 11 and 20 percent of the population) and indigenous (between one and three percent) suffer from discrimination, social exclusion, structural poverty, and a lack of political participation. This marginalization allows illicit drug cultivation and trafficking in their communities, subjecting them to disproportionate violence. Embassy Bogota has made a concerted effort to allocate resources towards these communities through programs sponsored by USAID and the Public Affairs Section. The identified project is directly linked to Mission priorities to implement programs that help Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations realize greater participation in the political and economic life of Colombia. On January 12, Deputy Secretary James Steinberg and Colombian Foreign Minister James Bermudez signed an Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality.

PROJECT NOMINATION: POLITICAL TRAINING FOR
AFRO-COLOMBIAN AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN

[¶3.](#) PROBLEM STATEMENT

Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women suffer additional barriers based on both gender and ethnicity. The nominated project focuses on women from the western Department of Choco along the Pacific Coast, which is primarily Afro-Colombian and Indigenous and has the highest levels of poverty in Colombia. Women from Choco suffer from social, economic, and political exclusion, leaving them at a stark disadvantage when competing with their male counterparts for political office; the issue of displacement compounds this problem. According to official statistics, 40% of the population of Choco has been displaced since 1995 and over 50% are women.

14. PROJECT SUMMARY

The nominated project targets women in Choco for activities that promote training, development, and political participation at the school for political leadership, "Women from Choco to Power." The school teaches women how to develop a successful political campaign and design effective public policy. In addition to empowering women, the school raises awareness among men through training on gender-specific issues. A portion of the project's funds will be dedicated to strengthening coordination between the Departmental Network of Choco Women of Colombia and the Network of Young Women in Choco, both of which play a role in the school's administration and are well positioned to promote change and development. Additionally, the project will support two income-generating initiatives that will be managed by displaced women community

leaders who plan to pursue careers in politics. These displaced women will receive political leadership training at the "Women from Choco to Power" school. The Departmental Network of Choco Women has already raised 30% of the funds needed to fund the project.

15. DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Objective 1: Political Training and Capacity Building of Women in Choco

Activity 1.1: Three 8-day trainings on human rights, public administration, cultural identity, advocacy, and campaign management.

Activity 1.2: A 2-day on-the-job training exercise at the City Council of Quibdo (the capital of Choco) and the Departmental Assembly.

Activity 1.3: Six workshops, three for young women and three for displaced women, that strengthen leadership skills.

Expected Results: 60 women and 10 men with expressed interest in running for office better equipped to run an effective campaign and serve as public servants with a sensitivity to gender issues. 15 displaced women leaders and 10 young women empowered and equipped to actively participate in the political process in their communities.

Indicators: Number of women/men trained, number of participants registered as candidates, number of participants elected to public office. Number of displaced women that run for public office and number of displaced women that are elected.

Objective 2: Income-generating projects to support displaced women

Activity 2.1: Creation of a store that sells local fresh produce ("Tienda Club") and is owned/managed by displaced women identified as leaders and potential political candidates who represent the interests of displaced women.

Activity 2.2: Creation of a store that sells local textiles ("Empresa de Confecciones") and is owned/managed by displaced women identified as leaders and potential political candidates who represent the interests of displaced women.

Activity 2.3: Political and business training for displaced women in charge of the two mentioned stores.

Expected Results: The creation of two sustainable businesses that benefit displaced women and the increased participation of displaced women in politics. At least two displaced women elected for public office.

Indicators: Number of displaced women trained, number of displaced women registered as candidates, and number of displaced women elected to a public office.

Objective 3: Strengthening Local Organizations

Activity 3.1: A three-day regional conference in September 2010 with leaders from 52 civic organizations which form the Departmental Network of Choco Women to develop an action plan.

Activity 3.2: A one-day workshop with the Governor and the Departmental Secretaries to discuss the issues that affect women in Choco.

Activity 3.3: A national conference on female entrepreneurship for leaders from the 52 civic organizations.

Expected Results: An organized and prepared network of organizations representing women in Choco with a developed action plan. Local government officials will be more aware of the issues affecting women, particularly displaced women. A cadre of better trained female leaders, particularly in business, will be formed.

Indicators: Number of participants in the design of a regional action plan for the network, number of agreements achieved with the government towards the promotion of the rights of women in Choco, and number of businesses created by women from the network.

Objective 4: Ensuring sustainability

Activity 4.1: Develop an evaluation which includes a summary of the results achieved under objectives 1-3 to sustain and build upon the

network's foundation.

Expected Results: An evaluation that details the process and results from each aforementioned workshop and activity.

16. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Departmental Network of Choco Women of Colombia is an umbrella group of 52 civic organizations. It was created in September 1992 and is represented in 18 of the 31 municipalities of the western Department of Choco. Its mission is to promote gender equality and contribute to the social development of the Department.

The structure of the network is as follows:

11. A General Assembly with 52 delegates each organization represented;

12. A coordinating team with seven coordinators elected by the General Assembly every three years;

13. A general Coordinator and/or Legal Representative elected by the coordinating team;

14. Working groups for finances, special projects, and relations with other organizations;

15. A senior advisor, normally one of the founders and director of one of the 52 organizations; and

16. Facilitators and tutors.

During the past 18 years, the Departmental Network of Choco Women has trained and empowered many women, as well as raised awareness among men about gender issues. The network currently has over 1,000 female and 25 male members. The network has attracted both national and international attention and has received support from the Canadian Embassy in Colombia, the Spanish Women's Institute, and USAID.

The network currently manages two income-generating projects: a restaurant that serves food from the region, "La Paila de mi Abuela" and an artisan store, "Tienda Artesanal de la RED." Not only do these two projects generate employment and income for community members, but they also help generate revenue for the network which is then invested in training for affiliated organizations to strengthen their leadership and advocacy skills.

In 2007, the Departmental Network of Choco Women received an award from one of Colombia's leading newspapers, *El Tiempo*, for being the organization that best meets its mission in Choco. In 2009, the organization received the Madeleine K. Albright Grant for its work to create greater roles for women in the region's civil and political life. The organization largely depends on fundraising efforts to fulfill its mission of empowering as many women as possible.

17. PROPOSED BUDGET AND POINT OF CONTACT

A proposed, detailed budget was e-mailed to the Secretary's Office

of Global Women's Issues per instructions. POC at post is Deputy
Political Counselor Shelby Smith-Wilson.
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